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Among the more subtle aspects of film storytelling, less often given consideration than the more overt, evident techniques of cinematography or editing, is production design. Often used interchangeably with “art director,” the title “production designer” denotes control over the visual composure of the diegesis. The overarching goal of the production designer is to manage and maintain the particular look of the world-within-the-film which the director seeks, by way of costume and furnishings as well as set

dressing and props. Few directors are as fastidious in their world creation as is Michael Haneke, his distinctive aesthetic perhaps the most significant aspect of his films. He teamed with production designer Christoph Kanter for his second feature, *Benny's Video* (1992), the international success of which would launch his career. With the exception of 2000's *Code Unknown*, the American remake of *Funny Games (*2007), and this year's *Amour* (2012),Kanter has acted as production designer on each of Haneke's subsequent films, the mutual growth of their collaboration culminating in a

German Film Award for Best Production Design for *The White Ribbon* (2009). One of only two crew members—the other is cinematographer Christian Berger—to maintain such a longstanding working relationship with Haneke, Kanter has proven crucial to the development of the director's style. In no film, however, has Kanter's work proven more invaluable to Haneke's than in the 1994 conclusion to the "Glaciation Trilogy": *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*.

Where the first two films of the Glaciation Trilogy—*The Seventh Continent* and *Benny's Video*—

examine the emotional vacuity of their characters, *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* turns the tables on its audience, Haneke bringing his extended thematic exploration to a close by reflecting the viewers' own dispassion. The film begins with a simple intertitle:

On 23.12.93, the 19 year old student Maximilian B. shot three people in a Viennese bank branch and killed himself with a bullet to the head shortly after.

The eponymous "fragments"—various scenes and a number of interspersed, unrelated newsreels from Austrian television broadcast

—follow several characters across the course of the two months leading up to this fatal culmination. In representing the tragic climax of the film by way of a one minute newsreel, emulating the style of those news reports scattered throughout the film, Haneke reveals the horror hidden behind the events we cursorily witness daily in the media, showing us the lives destroyed and fragmented by each of these terrible incidents we are so quick to forget. Crucial to this exposé is the establishment of *71 Fragments*' characters as sympathetic, relatable human beings: for the film to make its

shattering statement, we need to appreciate the significance of these deaths and the sad loss of these lives. Something of a difficulty to convey through Haneke’s reserved, aloof aesthetic, it falls to the mise-en-scène to communicate the intricacies of each character, and to Kanter’s production design to tell us what we need to know about these people.

Perhaps the most emotionally engaging character of the film is the elderly Herr Tomek (Otto Grünmandl), a man whose life of isolation finds ripe manifestation in the environment of his home. We first see him visiting his daughter

Sabine (Patricia Hirschbichler) at the bank where she works; she is embarrassed by his presence and quick to be rid of him. His loneliness, left without significant family contact, is emphasised in Kanter's staging of his home. Consider, for instance, his kitchen: his table is stocked with single items, the sole dinner place highlighting the singularity of this existence. The table, half its surface covered with various condiments and crockery, houses the room for only one diner. Visible in the room are two chairs other than Herr Tomek's own: one stands in a corner tucked away by the

sink, out of sight and unused; the other is laden with towels, evidently long neglected in its intended purpose. Alone for the majority of his scenes, Herr Tomek's loneliness finds the requisite expression in these key visual details, Kanter's arrangement of the room contributing the vast majority of information about this character.

The second key scene involving Herr Tomek sees him on the phone to his daughter, animatedly conversing. While the dialogue of the scene provides the bulk of our understanding of the nature of this relationship, Kanter's work

supplements Haneke’s writing in valuable ways. The room in which Herr Tomek sits is bare, save the bookshelf and television to either side which frame him—Grossvogel describes him as “cocooned within [his] private dreariness” (39). The isolation of his life is amplified in the uninviting condition of his surroundings, thus making all the more appreciable the happiness he displays to have some human contact. The positioning of the phone directly in the centre of the screen—and thus the centre of the character’s life—highlights the fact that this communication is everything to him.

Identified as he is in the film’s opening frame as the person who will go on to murder three people before killing himself, Max (Lukas Miko) is an extremely difficult character to make sympathetic; attempting to justify his actions would inevitably alienate an audience. Again Haneke entrusts a difficult task to Kanter, allowing the mise-en-scène of the film to establish the mindscape of Max. A particularly famous sequence which sees him in training for table tennis is one of the most expressive scenes of the film, the objects in the frame and the space they fill visualising the character

and providing the kind of exposition impossible to convey convincingly by way of dialogue. A half-fallen net bisects the screen from corner to corner, literally cutting Max’s world—and indeed he himself—in half. The table itself seems to press him against the wall, almost suffocating in its size. He appears dwarfed by the scale of the table, its foreboding presence coupling with the cage-like image of the net to cast him as a prisoner in this world of athletic expectations that “certainly illustrates his self-inflicted, self-destructive subjection to modern

technocracy, suggesting that, at one point, something

in him must have snapped” (Grundmann 12). It mirrors a later scene where we see the sprawling expanse of his study desk, filling the frame from left to right and reinforcing this concept of a life dominated by the expectations of society. Crammed with books, just a few feet from Max’s bed, covering an entire wall of his small room, the desk represents the overbearing burden of academia upon this student, his later action here foreshadowed and his rationale evinced by way of Kanter’s design.

The identity of the three people killed by Max is never revealed in the film; he fires indiscriminately into the crowded bank, the camera focusing on his face rather than on his victims. Afterwards, Haneke cuts to a shot of the right arm and torso of a lifeless corpse, a pool of blood slowly extending outward from it. It’s interesting that the clothing so easily identifies this as the bank courier Hans (Branko Samarovski); ostensibly the least likeable of the film’s characters, his morning routine is shown a number of times throughout the film. He is friendly to the people he meets along the way, but once returned

home treats his wife (Claudia Martini) with emotional and physical cruelty, at one point slapping her when she criticises his drinking. The scene is austerely staged, the dinner table set with only the plates from which they eat, Hans' bottle ominously foregrounded. Kanter's positioning of the objects in the scene offers a visual analysis of the marriage, the sparse dialogue between the two not enough in itself to cement our understanding of their relationship. Brophy comments that the film's "audiovisual imbalance impregnates the characters and their situations with an emotional

disconnectivity from their living breathing surroundings”; no scene better demonstrates Kanter’s contribution to overcoming such disconnection than this.

It is because of our investment in the characters of *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* that its ending impacts us so greatly; without so deep an understanding and appreciation of them as human beings we would not realise the significance of Haneke’s conclusion and the comments he passes upon us as viewers. As we have seen, Kanter’s contribution to this understanding is pivotal, his elucidation of the personalities and

mentalities of the characters often more important than that of even the dialogue. His production design allows the intricacies of these creations to be communicated without excess exposition, complementing the restraint of Haneke’s aesthetic and facilitating a sympathetic investment with these characters as they inevitably crawl toward their demise.